

Rules of the Game

Making Magic Items (Part Five)

By Skip Williams



At this point, most of the items we've examined have costs that can be calculated by applying a formula based on the spells whose effects they duplicate or on the values of their enhancement bonuses. Many of the items we'll consider this week don't duplicate spell effects and don't have enhancement bonuses, and they have costs derived mostly from a game designer's good judgment rather than any formula. As with weapons, armor, and shields, however, you can't go far wrong when creating these items yourself if you stick to examples you find in the rulebooks.

Creating Rings

A ring can duplicate a spell or it can have unique powers. In either case, the procedure a character follows when making the ring is the same. As one would expect, a ring that duplicates a spell has a cost determined in much the same way as a scroll's or staff's costs is determined. Other rings have costs that someone has assigned (more about that in Part Seven).

Fortunately, the rings included in the *Dungeon Master's Guide* and other rulebooks have complete descriptions, so you don't have to do many calculations to figure out how much the ring might cost.

Prerequisites: To make a magic ring, you need the Forge Ring item creation feat. (The feat itself has a caster level of 12th as a prerequisite.) The creator also must have a caster level at least equal to the ring's caster level and must meet any other prerequisites noted in the ring's description. Anyone creating an entirely new ring must include a list of prerequisites along with the new ring's item description.

Caster Level: A ring's caster level is fixed -- the creator cannot adjust it as she can for a scroll, potion, wand or staff.

Equipment and Materials: To make a magic ring, you need a set of tools suitable for working the material from which the ring is made, which usually includes metalworking tools. You also need a fire source and a collection of oddments similar to materials used to create wands. The rules don't specify the kind of fire source, but a small brazier, campfire, fireplace, or furnace should suffice. The cost for the fire is subsumed in basic cost for materials, as is the cost of the sundry other materials you need.

Cost: In most cases, a ring's base cost is the same as its market price. You need to beware of rings that duplicate spells with extra costs for material components or with XP components (see the notes on creation cost).

Creation Cost: The monetary cost to create a magic ring is half the base price.

The experience cost to create a ring is 1/25th the base price.

When a ring duplicates a costly spell, its description includes a cost entry, which gives the monetary cost to make the ring, plus the experience cost. The monetary cost is based on what the ring can do, and it was derived with help from Table 7-33 in the *Dungeon Master's Guide*. The experience portion of the creation cost is 1/25th the monetary cost, plus the extra XP cost for the spell. That extra cost is based on the number of times the ring can produce the effect (if the ring has charges) or 50 times the extra cost if the ring doesn't have charges.

Sometimes, a ring works only a certain number of times each day. If so the cost to create it is reduced (more about that in Part Seven).

Market Price: The market price for a ring is the base price, plus the cost of any costly components required for the spell it duplicates, plus 5 times any extra experience required to create the ring because of the spells it duplicates.

Example Ring Costs: As noted earlier, ring prices can vary quite a bit, depending on what the ring does. You can take most costs for rings directly from their descriptions; however, learning to use Table 7-33 is pretty important when you start designing new items, so let's go that route for our examples:

Ring of Protection +3: The ring provides a deflection bonus to Armor Class, which, according to Table 7-33, has a base price equal to the bonus squared x 2,000 gp. For a bonus of +3 that's 18,000 gp ($3 \times 3 \times 2,000$ gp). The monetary cost to create the ring is half that (9,000 gp) and the experience cost is 1/25th the base cost (720 XP).

Ring of Swimming: The ring provides a +5 competence bonus on Swim checks, which, according to Table 7-33, has a base price equal to the bonus squared x 100 gp. For a bonus of +5 that's 2,500 gp ($5 \times 5 \times 100$ gp). The monetary cost to create the ring is half that (1,250 gp) and the experience cost is 1/25th the base cost (100 XP).

Ring of Feather Falling: The ring provides a *feather fall* spell effect whenever needed. The closest entry on Table 7-33 is a use-activated spell effect, which has a base price equal to the spell level x the caster level x 2,000 gp. *Feather fall* is a 1st-level spell and the ring has a caster level of 1st; according to the formula, the ring should have a base cost of $1 \times 1 \times 2,000$ gp. According to the ring's description, however, the price is 2,200 gp. Evidently the designer felt that having *feather fall* instantly available whenever you call is worth a little more than the formula indicates. The cost to create this ring is half the base price (1,100 gp). The experience cost is 1/25th base price (88 XP).

Ring of Three Wishes: The ring stores three *wish* spells, which are available to the wearer on command. Once all three wishes are used up, the ring is nonmagical. There are two entries on Table 7-33 that are somewhat like this item; one is the scroll entry (single use, spell completion) which has a cost of spell level x caster level x 25 gp, and the other is the potion entry (single use, spell completion) which has a cost of spell level x caster level x 50 gp. Neither one of these actually matches what the ring does, but it's a good bet that the ring's value falls somewhere in between these two extremes. A look at the other entries in the table shows that a command-activated item costs only about 90% of what the same item would cost if use activated. That is, a command-activated spell effect has a price equal to spell level x caster level x 1,800 gp, which is exactly 90% of the use-activated cost of spell level x caster level x 2,000 gp. If we take 90% of the potion value, we get spell level x caster level x 45 gp ($50 \times 0.9 = 45$). However, a ring takes on an item slot and a potion does not, so another reduction is in order. If we assume the ring is worth about 85% of the use-activated value, we get a formula of spell level x caster level x 42.5 gp ($50 \times 0.85 = 42.5$). Using this formula, we get a base price of 22,950 for the ring ($9 \times 20 \times 42.5 \times 3 = 22,950$). The monetary cost to create the ring would be half the base price, 11,475 gp, which is exactly what the item description shows. The XP cost is 1/25th of the base cost (918 XP) plus the XP components for three *wish* spells or 15,918 XP ($918 + 15,000$). The market price for the ring is the base cost

of 22,950 gp plus five times the extra XP cost (75,000), or 97,950 gp.

Ring Miscellany: As with a wand or a staff, a charged ring that has less than full charges is worth less than a fully charged item. A *ring of one wish*, for example is worth only one third what a *ring of three wishes* is, or 32,650 gp. Unlike wands and staffs, there's no rule that says you must create a charged ring with full charges. A *ring of one wish* has a base price of 7,650 (9 x 20 x 42.5 gp) and a cost to create of 3,825 gp plus 5,306 XP.

Creating Rods

The defining characteristic of a rod is that it has multiple powers that don't duplicate any known spell.

Prerequisites: To make a magic rod, you need the Craft Rod item creation feat. (The feat itself has a caster level of 9th as a prerequisite.) The creator also must have a caster level at least equal to the rod's caster level and must meet any other prerequisites noted in the rod's description. Anyone creating an entirely new rod must include a list of prerequisites along with the new rod's item description.

Caster Level: A rod's caster level is fixed -- the creator cannot adjust it as she can for a scroll, potion, wand or staff.

Equipment and Materials: According to Table 7-32 in the *Dungeon Master's Guide*, a rod that can function as a weapon requires a masterwork weapon of the appropriate kind (such as a masterwork dire flail for a *rod of flailing*). If a rod can function as several different weapons, only one masterwork weapon is required (the largest or the most expensive weapon in the array makes the most sense). The prices for the example rods on pages 233-237 in the *Dungeon Master's Guide*, however, don't include extra costs for masterwork weaponry, so it's best to assume that the weapon cost is subsumed in the creation cost for the rod.

Rods that don't function as weapons don't require a masterwork weapon. Otherwise, making any rod requires the same sorts of equipment and materials as making magic armor or a magic weapon.

Cost: Rod prices are difficult to formalize, so when creating a rod from a rulebook it's best to refer to the rod's description (see Part Seven for notes on setting prices for new items). In most cases, a rod's base cost is the same as its market price.

Creation Cost: The monetary cost to create a magic rod is half the base price.

The experience cost to create a rod is 1/25th the base price.

Market Price: As noted earlier, the market price for a rod is the same as base price.

Example Rod Costs: Here are the calculations for making a *rod of enemy detection* from the *Dungeon Master's Guide*.

The listed market price for this rod is 23,500 gp, which is the same as the base price. The monetary cost to make the rod is half the base price (11,750 gp). The experience cost is 1/25th the base cost (940 XP).

Creating Wondrous Items

A wondrous item can have any kind of magical powers, but in general, creating a wondrous item is just like creating a magic ring or rod.

Prerequisites: To make a wondrous item, you need the Craft Wondrous item creation feat. (The feat itself has a caster level of 3rd as a prerequisite.) The creator also must have a caster level at least equal to the item's caster level and must meet any other prerequisites noted in the item's description. Anyone creating an entirely new wondrous item must include a list of prerequisites along with the new item description.

Caster Level: A wondrous item's caster level is fixed -- the creator cannot adjust it as she can for a scroll, potion, wand, or staff.

Equipment and Materials: A wondrous item requires the same sorts of equipment and supplies as a ring or rod requires. The cost for these items is subsumed in the item's creation cost.

Cost: As with a rod, it's best to refer to the wondrous item's description (see Part Seven for notes of setting prices for new items). In most cases, a wondrous item's base cost is the same as its market price.

Creation Cost: The monetary cost to create a wondrous item is half the base price.

The experience cost to create a rod is 1/25th the base price.

Market Price: As noted earlier, the market price for a wondrous item is the same as its base price.

What's Next?

That pretty well covers rings, rods, and wondrous items. Next week we'll consider what's involved in creating items that aren't presented in the books.

About the Author

Skip Williams keeps busy with freelance projects for several different game companies and was the Sage of *Dragon Magazine* for 18 years. Skip is a co-designer of the **D&D** 3rd Edition game and the chief architect of the *Monster Manual*. When not devising swift and cruel deaths for player characters, Skip putters in his kitchen or garden (rabbits and deer are not Skip's friends) or works on repairing and improving the century-old farmhouse that he shares with his wife, Penny, and a growing menagerie of pets.

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